

The Village Headman

622 The village headman (*Sekulu yimbo*) is in a very real sense the father of the villagers. Considering their relationship to him as shown by the survey of Ngendo, it is no surprise to find that to nearly all of the householders the headman is quite literally either 'father' (*tate*) or 'elder brother' (*kota*). The headman is literally the patriarch. He is also therefore the village priest. His com-
 [769] pound is the only one in the village which has a spirit hut (*etambo*). In this hut the elder prays to ancestral spirits and holds communion (*oku felevela*) with them. In case of need, he may spend an entire night or more so occupied, but he will often offer a prayer when he awakens during the night. This hut is also used as a store-room for possessions not used every day and here are kept the insignia of office. The elder may sleep in this hut at any time when he is not sleeping with one of his wives, and here also he may lodge respected guests.

622 The headman functions as a Justice of the Peace for the village.

692 The graver and more difficult cases are heard before the whole village on the dance-floor, while the simpler ones which require the attendance only of those concerned, together with their respective elders, are taken up either in the *onjango* or in the headman's own courtyard. Through all and in spite of all political and administrative changes, the village court of justice continues and will continue to function.

622 It is evident from the above that a headman may have much or
 554 little to do in attending to the affairs of his village, depending on several factors, such as the number of the villagers, their attitudes and disposition toward each other, relations with neighbouring villages, the demands made upon the village by the authorities, &c. However numerous may be his 'official duties', he will still find some time to attend to his own affairs, whether he be a farmer, a hunter, or a trader. In former times and before he became village headman, Sikilile was a trader and caravan leader (*ofumbelo*, Portuguese: *pombeiro*), and made many trips to the regions of Ngangela. As a headman he returned to farming and although he seemed to be quite old at the time of my visits, he had a creditable little plot of tobacco. It may be of interest to note that only the headman may speak of the village as 'my village' (*imbo liange*). The heads of the little wards may speak thus possessively only of

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their own wards, 'my ward' (*ocimula cange*). The other villagers will speak only of 'our village' (*imbo lieta*). 622
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There are, in general, two quite different and distinct types of Umbundu village according to the terrain on which they are built. The villages of the plains have room to spread out and tend toward a circular shape, with the dancing floor and men's club house near the centre. The wards may appear as quarters of a single whole or they may be added on in haphazard fashion. The villages of the mountains must conform to the possibilities of the terrain. Formerly, many villages were built on mountains for defence, and capital villages of this type may still be seen with the houses built on ledges and rocks almost one on top of the other. In this type of village, there is often not sufficient or sufficiently good soil for even small garden plots within the palisades. Occasionally one of these mountain villages may be found which has not even room within it for the dancing floor, which will in this case be found outside the palisade. If the site is not too severely confined, the wards of the mountain village tend either to string themselves out horizontally along the mountain-side, or to find successive ledges. The village of Ngendo is of an intermediate type, built as it is, on a slope. Sikilile's village was first built as near the stream as possible. The wards later added themselves on, each a little higher than the one before. The school village, which was built last, got the highest and most hygienic site. 361

Moving a Village

Villages may be moved for any one of several reasons. When fields are worn out and others are not available¹ near by, a village may be moved to a site more conveniently located. More often, however, the reason assigned is that there has been much illness or death, that the old site is polluted, that its 'air is bad', which to the Ovimbundu means that some action displeasing to the spirits has been committed which has brought on these misfortunes. This will generally have been determined by divination, as will also the spirits' consent to the proposed new site. A site which has long been occupied is of course fertile soil. Since old sites are generally cultivated to good advantage this fact should not be overlooked as a possible additional reason for moving. (787)

¹ Nowadays European settlement often pre-empta such lands.

(177)

291 The practice and teaching of modesty seem to have been chang-
 559 ing considerably for a long time. The influence of Europeans has
 • doubtless had its effect, but more fundamental, it seems, has been
 the effect of increasingly generalized use of clothing, a process
 which began perhaps 200 years ago, but is yet far from complete.
 The time when boy or girl may begin to wear clothing is deter-
 mined less by age than by the economic status of his family. There
 seems to be no shame (on the part of the child) connected with
 late wearing of clothes, but once a child has begun to wear a cloth,
 he or she is taught that it is shameful to take it off in the presence
 of those who are older. That this attitude is not of recent origin
 is attested by its appearance in a biographical narrative which goes
 back sixty years or more.¹ A large proportion of the women have
 only enough cloth for workaday wear for a short skirt, so that they
 leave the torso bare, but once one becomes accustomed to covering
 the torso always, she would be ashamed not to. This feeling
 belongs more to the field of economic status than to that of modesty.
 This shows up clearly in the strong objection to being ragged
 (*epile*), which has nothing to do with modesty but rather with
 economic status. The narrative concludes the teaching of social
 usage with this observation: 'From the time that children first
 enter into the school of understanding (*olondange*), parents recog-
 nize that it is proper to respect them, rather than to revile them
 or tell them that which is evil.'

869 3. *Training in skills.* Before the age of eight or nine, children
 acquire few definite skills. Many of their games, however, are in
 imitation of adult activities, and adults recognize their preparatory
 nature and value. The little girl in caring for her younger sibling
 acquires certain skills, but with little or no definite adult guidance.
 Little boys begin early to make and set traps and snares under the
 tuition of an elder sibling or cousin. The first rat or bird caught be-
 longs to the tutor. Games of many sorts are played: games with sides,
 round games, games with an 'It', imaginative games, and competitive
 games; games demanding skill, especially with dances of some in-
 tricacy. Games in imitation of animals are favourites, including
 'birdcalls', in which very ingenious words are set to the bird songs.

604 4. The Ovimbundu have a custom somewhat comparable to
 167 what Vedder calls 'child insurance' among the Herero,² i.e., the

¹ From a manuscript by Daniel Kalei of Bailunda.

² In Hahn *et al.*, op. cit., p. 177.

157 animals.¹ Other tales with frankly human protagonists portray
 538 the same theme,² and there are a number of Umbundu adapta-
 593 tions and variations of such European versions of this theme as
 Cinderella, Snow White, &c. In some tales, such as 'Kalitangi', the
 hero escaped as an infant from an agreement made by his mother
 before his birth with another expectant mother that they would
 both destroy their offspring. Does this indicate a resentment of,
 or a protest against, child-sacrifice in certain Umbundu rites?
 I mention this as one possible source for the feeling of neglect and
 'rejection' which, however, does not seem to be as acute or as
 widespread as in our own society.³ The exact situation could only
 be determined by careful and extensive investigation.

593 Adjustments between siblings among the Ovimbundu on the
 152 whole are relatively satisfactory. Resentment on the part of the
 younger does sometimes occur as indicated above. Overt sibling
 [643] conflict has also arisen quite frequently in the royal families because
 of disputes over the succession. Instances of this latter type
 of conflict may be found in narratives of the early missionaries,⁴
 in diaries of Silva Porto,⁵ and in other early sources. Conflict from
 jealousy arising out of the parent-child relationship, however,
 seems to be relatively rare. In a kinship society regulated by the
 hierarchy of age, jealousy between siblings does not quite fit into
 the picture. The two most common terms for jealousy over
 personal relations refer strictly to sexual jealousy: *esepa*, woman's
 jealousy; and *akuelame*, jealousy on the part of a man. The other
 terms are somewhat more applicable but they belong less to house-
 hold affairs. The meaning of *owya* is jealousy and envy, while
ocipulala is covetousness and so belongs to the economic sphere.

572 Friendship, especially between age-mates or 'coevals', has played
 [554] and continues to play an important role in Umbundu social adjust-
 • ments. Such differences as social station, family, distance of
 habitation, and even diversity of language and culture are easily
 bridged by friendship. Many friendships were formed on trading

¹ Cf. *Journal of the American Folk-Lore Society*, 1922, vol. 35, nos. 1 and 18, pp. 116 f., 140 ff.

² The tale of *Nteta la keta liyo* (Baby and his elder sister) referred to *supra*, p. 84.

³ Investigations of the 'foster-child phantasy', feelings of neglect, 'rejection', &c., reported by Murphy, *op. cit.*, p. 415 f.; and by Allport, *op. cit.*, p. 364 f.

⁴ *Missionary Herald*, 1888, p. 242 f.

⁵ In *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 1885, 1886.

suspected as indications of sorcery. It would of course be impos-
sible to indicate what proportion achieve the ideal. It would seem
that their respective manners of life have favoured its development
in the men more largely than in the women. May this perhaps be
one reason why women seem to be caught more often in the vicious
circle of suspicion of sorcery?

Fearing anger and ill will as a root-cause of sorcery, yet de-
veloping a very aggressive type of character, and achieving in their
villages and other social groupings such a large measure of socialized
life, the adjustments in anger achieved have been, perhaps, a
necessary prerequisite. That does not make the achievement any
less important. Note has already been made of the ability to use
humour as an outlet for anger, which is held to be an indication of
true insight.¹

Statesmanlike ability, good judgement, and dignity were often
noted by the early missionaries as qualities of some of the old
kings, councillors, and headmen.² After 1900 these qualities were
less often observed, owing perhaps to the demoralizing effects of the
rum trade. These qualities have, however, survived to the present
day and may be observed in pastors, elders, teachers, and other
leaders of the church. That shrewd behaviour (*oku lunguka*) is
appreciated by this great trading people is easily understood, but
it is not as universally or unreservedly admired as are some other
types.

There is also a tender side to Umbundu character. It might
conceivably be supposed that long-continued and intimate partici-
pation in such inhumane occupations as the slave-trade might
leave a stamp of callous brutality on the character of the Ovi-
mbundu generally.³ On second thought a similar question might be
raised with regard to Americans because of their participation in
the same slave-traffic, or their more recent participation in equally
ruthless practices under the banner of modern capitalism.

The rarity or absence among kings of the Ovimbundu of resort
to 'revolting and wholesale punishments—so common at African
courts' has been noted.⁴ On the positive side, a most admirable

¹ Cf. Allport, *op. cit.*, pp. 118, 344.

² Cf. *Missionary Herald*, 1883, p. 229; 1886, p. 143; 1887, pp. 26, 330, &c.

³ H. W. Nevins alleged some such effect. Cf. *A Modern Slavery*, chap. II.
The references are to people of Viya. The effects noted were more probably due
to long association with Europeans.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21 f.

606 octombo (since Childs states (p.55) that it includes every relative of the generation of the spouse's parents.) Ndutumbo must avoid: (i) speaking each other's names. This may be accomplished by using the names compounded from those of children (thus Ndumbotia and Sakumbotia are the father and mother of Kumbotia) or by using the terms which one's spouse uses, i.e. sei, tote, some etc. (ii) seeing each other, if they are of opposite sex; if it is necessary to converse, it must be done out of sight, or with gaze averted. (iii) eating with each other. (This applies only to regular meals and not to casual refreshment.)

607 (c) The term *nawa* is used reciprocally for all the spouse's relatives of one's own generation, including those classed as "sister", "brother" and "cross-cousin". Between the *nawa* the only avoidance enjoined is that they may not eat regular meals in each other's presence; otherwise they are on "free and easy" terms".

"Avoidance of meeting ... is especially difficult for the bride who comes to live in a village of her husband's people, a large proportion of the men of which may be *ndutumbo* to her. The prohibition may be lifted by ... a simple ceremony, in which each rubs a little oil on the other ... Avoidance of eating in each other's presence may be done away with after some months by sacrificing a chicken and feeding it ceremonially ... to the *ndutumbo* or *nawa* ... It is especially important that the ceremonies be carried through with respect (*esumbilo*)."(1)

A note on the kinship system

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178 There is a tendency today for the claims of the *clouse*, the land-owning group, to supplant those of the property-owning *clouses*; one important reason for this is the change from trade to agriculture as the most important economic activity. With European influence also conflicts have arisen over rights to children. Childs states(2) that the bilineal kinship system has been a factor leading to social stability, especially stability of marriage, but he does not elaborate this statement.

LOCAL GROUPS(3)

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595 The "household", consisting of a man, his wife or wives and children, and such other related or unrelated dependants as may be attached to this basic group, is the basis of the village. The word *onjo* (house) may be used for this group, i.e. to include the various houses which a man may have established by marriage, or it may be used for the house of any one of his wives. Each wife has her own hut, granary, chickens, and fields for her children and herself, and the husband has no house of his own unless he is village headman or the head of an *olusina*, in which case he has a spirit-hut (*etumbo*) in which he may sometimes pass the night. Sons when they marry form their own households, usually in their father's village. The size of the household varies greatly according to wealth and status. Some recent kings have had as many as 12 wives. But it has been noted above that, in Childs' typical village, out of 48 households only 10

(1) Childs, p.52.

(2) *Ibid.*, p.54: see also *ibid.*, pp.70, 45, 50 etc.

(3) This section is based on Childs, 1969, pp.25-41.

301 The new ornaments had acquired no sentimental value, therefore
321 their price was moderate.

[171] Omba shells are to be seen in use from Kipungo southward through
Huila, among the Luvando, and among the Vakwanyama of southern
Angola. In the places mentioned one may judge the social status
• [554] of a woman by the number of omba shells she wears. A principal
wife is usually well supplied with these ornaments.

302 In this southern journey it was noticeable that there was an
171 increasing use of red pigment which is lavishly employed for smearing
[294] every kind of ornament, the body, and the hair. Leather belts and
skirts of Vakwanyama women are thickly coated with red pigment
which is invariably mixed with grease. The red powder is prepared
[824] by desiccating a red wood called *takula* by the Vakwanyama, a name
which is used through Angola and the southern Congo area.

912 From Kipungo southward through the Vakwanyama country
171 there is a notable absence of decorative wooden hair combs. On the
contrary, delicately carved combs are used by both men and women
of the Ovimbundu. The Vasele make such combs, but by far the best
[572] examples are made and used by the Vachokue tribe of eastern Angola.
Here the decorative design usually includes a well-carved human
figure at the top of the comb.

301 Among the Vakwanyama, necklaces of disks made from ostrich
[237] eggshell are worn by the women only. A woman of importance has
[559] a dozen loops of such necklaces, each loop being about 125 cm long.
These necklaces are so greatly esteemed that only after much persuasion
can a woman be induced to part with a single link. Perhaps, as
is the case with omba shell, there is more than the intrinsic value to
be considered. One point is constantly noticed in considering social
status and ornament. All the wives of a wealthy man, especially
among the Vakwanyama, are made to advertise their husband's position
by the profusion of their ornaments and the quality of their
leather skirts and belts.

[321] There is, in addition to the necklaces of ostrich-eggshell beads, a
highly prized necklace made from small perforated disks of shell
having a diameter of about a centimeter. The Vakwanyama women
smear a necklace of this kind with grease and *takula* powder; the
[435] value of a necklace 125 cm long is equivalent to that of an ox. In
describing these necklaces there is interest in noting that they are
traded to the south of Angola from places six hundred miles to the
[439] north; therefore their value is to some extent dependent on rarity
and distant origin.

EDUCATION

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of the word depends upon the syllable accented and the context, as further explained in the chapter on the Umbundu language.

A man or woman of the royal family greets the king with the words *na kaku*; *na* means "lord," and *kaku* is a term used for any old man to whom the speaker intends to show respect. *Kaku* is also applied to a man who stands in the relationship of grandfather. The king is expected to reply to a greeting given by one of the royal family by placing his right hand on his chest and saying twice, "*kakupa*." There may then follow from the king a question relating to welfare in general. Possibly the king will inquire the object of his subject's journey. A *sekula* ("chief of a village") greets a king in the same manner as does a commoner, and the king replies as he would to a commoner.

Commoners greet a *sekula* with the words *na kakupa* ("lord, greeting"). One *sekula* greets another of the same rank with the one word *kakupa*, accompanied by clapping of the palms. Male commoners clap hands on meeting; this action is accompanied by the word *kakupa*, from each of them. Two female commoners use the word *kakupa* as a greeting, but as a rule they do not clap hands. They do, however, clap their palms when greeting a woman of the royal house.

Boys and girls must greet their fathers, maternal uncles, grandfathers, and other old men with either of the terms *na kaku* or *na kakupa*, the latter being more usual. *Na kaku* would be the appropriate term of respect for any elderly man. Children use the same words (*na kaku*) when addressing any elderly woman, including a grandmother. A usual greeting of a child to the mother, likewise to the mother's sister, would be *kakupa mai* ("greetings, mother").

There is no prescribed form of address to the medicine-man. Greetings between a commoner and a medicine-man follow the usage noted for two commoners. Ngonga says, "They will treat him (the medicine-man) like a village chief if he is an old man and good. Perhaps they will say *na kakupa* as if talking to a chief."

In the early morning people pass the greeting *oku lipasala*. This means "we have been like dead, we are awake." The appropriate early morning greeting of a commoner to the king or to a chief is *oku lipasala o kaku*. A usual afternoon greeting is *oku lalila*. The evening greeting is *oku liukupa*.

One who desires to pass across a room usually walks in front of other people, but while passing the attitude must not be erect. The thumb and middle finger should be snapped together, while the words

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- 756 men and women each of whom receives the name *ocimbonda*, and specialization in some particular form of magical practice is the rule. Some practitioners are more highly esteemed than others. • [554] For example, an *ocimbonda* who has the reputation for curing dizziness, madness, and *oyulaisi* (p. 281) is one of great repute; so also is the man who can cure a case of blood in the urine (*belicesa*). [164] This is the Portuguese term commonly applied to blackwater fever.

DIVINATION

- 787 An examination of objects collected gives the best indication of the equipment of the *ocimbonda*, and among these no item is more important than the small divination basket containing a heterogeneous collection of objects.

A diviner receives the distinguishing title of *ocimbonda conqomba*, and a description of his methods explains his belief in the activities of spirits. He shakes the basket while his assistant plays a small friction drum; then he inspects the objects lying at the top.

A figure with beads on its neck indicates that trouble is due to the ghost of a dead baby whose spirit wishes to come back.

A piece of gourd with a round orifice means that some one has been talking too much. The orifice represents a human mouth.

Two figures, male and female, whispering together, indicate that a husband and wife are making a plan to poison somebody.

The figure of a female with a large abdomen indicates that the spirit of a deceased pregnant woman is causing sickness in the village.

The horn with shells on it indicates that the woman who is consulting the diviner will not bear children.

- [177] There is a little figure with a black tuft on its head, whose arrival at the top of the basket indicates that misfortune among the natives is caused by Europeans. When talking to this figure the medicine-man tries to speak like a white man by adopting a falsetto voice and mimicking the intonation of Europeans.

The figure with a little crest on its head is an indication of sickness or other trouble arising from a spirit which likes to drink blood. When this figure comes to the top of the basket, the medicine-man induces the blood-drinking spirit to enter a man, because the evil must first be localized before it can be exorcised. This possessed person dances with a small ax or a hair switch in his hand. When dancing has induced a frenzy, the dancer kills a pig and drinks the fresh blood. The blood-drinking spirit is in this way exorcised from the community.

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621 for individuals to build up large villages—thus Simbwyikoka encouraged people to settle at Mwekalia to make it a large village. It may also be suggested that the power of the village headmen was to some extent linked with the power of the chief, since the headmen were associated politically with the chief, and would from this, tend to gain authority in their dealings with their fellow villagers. The village headmen also lacked any real competition from other types of leadership. Mbati had kept relations with the post in his own hands, and there were therefore no government headmen. The first catechist had arrived in Mbati's village in 1928, but cannot have met with much lasting success as there are few baptized Christians over thirty-five in Gumba.

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554 Other factors at the time strengthening the position of the village headmen were the low rate of labour migration¹⁸ and the fact that practically every man over forty at the time of Simbwyikoka's accession had participated in the rubber trade. This meant that many of the best known caravan leaders were still in full vigour, and enjoyed a prestige based on the first-hand knowledge of the middle-aged and older men.

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(634) Between this period of the middle thirties and the beginning of my own fieldwork twenty years had passed and many changes had taken place. The status of the chief had sharply declined and he was now assisted by the four government headmen. Every village except the chief's village had a Catholic or Protestant catechist, and there had been a marked trend [293] towards learning catechism in preparation for baptism, which had begun about 1946. Hence the catechetical school was usually attended by the majority of under twenty-five's in the village.

621 Agnatic kinship had ceased to be the principle of village membership. Nor can it be said that headmen build up villages by getting people to settle at a particular spot. It is not always easy even to find the headman, village population is not very stable, and a man can settle with any category of kin.

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124 To discover the traditional headman required careful phrasing of questions. When I visited a village and asked for the *akulu yimbo* (the traditional phrase for the village headman) I

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 214.

In the previous

THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF VILLAGES

chapter I have indicated that the position of headman is today ⁶²² a somewhat shadowy one, and that the headman emerges rather than succeeds by virtue of various grounds; the main ones being official recognition, some tie to the local chief, the presence of a core of one's kinsmen, a claim to be the first resident, and personality. During my stay Sapapula was as much a headman of Epalanga as anyone can reasonably be these days, yet his position had not always gone unchallenged.

In 1954 he had found himself in danger of being displaced ⁶²⁰ by his matrilinear 'brother' Mwehombo. Both men, appar- ⁶⁶⁵ ently, claimed that they had founded the village, both had substantial cores of kinsfolk in the village, and both possessed strong personalities. Sapapula by holding the ministerial title of Epalanga to Kafelo had had a stronger position in village affairs. This prop to his power was taken away when Kafelo was deposed from the chiefdom, and Luanga and Mwehombo purchased the title of Epalanga from Lusase.

In this partnership Mwehombo must have been the leading personality, Luanga being extremely amiable but not at all domineering or energetic. Mwehombo's idea was presumably to establish himself as recognized headman of Epalanga, and to obtain whatever advantages were to be gained from an association with Lusase. Luanga's aim, from what he told me, was to escape contract labour by having a position as a traditional headman and title-holder. Titles will still be sought after, ⁽⁵⁵⁴⁾ although the substance of power has gone, so long as they can confer some prestige or protection from administrative labour demands. It was not customary for the role of Epalanga to be held by two people jointly.

Mwehombo died shortly after this. He had been baptized ⁷⁶³ by the name of Simon when dying on January 13th 1955, when his social personality began its posthumous career. At the inquest, which was held according to the old Umbundu pattern in which the corpse suspended in a hammock from a pole held by two men was supposed to answer questions by the way it swung, it was found that Mwehombo had suffered the proverbial fate of the sorcerer in being killed by the spirit he had ⁽⁵⁵⁴⁾ ⁽⁵⁶¹⁾ used to kill others.

The role of the questioner was taken by Paulo, sister's son to

THE CATECHETICAL SCHOOL

servant of mine explaining how the Mwekalia chose the chief 797
 said, giving me a comparison: 'The Bishop of Nova Lisboa
 thinks "This priest has sense" and so makes him the superior of
 a mission'.⁶ The disintegration of the old political system, and 178
 the association of its representatives with the ritual values which
 are no longer very significant for the mass of Ovimbundu, has
 destroyed the old pyramid of authority and prestige. The
 people associate demands and punishment, for which they seem 648
 to receive very little in return, with the post. Many draw a
 distinction between the actual *chefe* and the government, which
 they regard as benevolent and ignorant of the behaviour of its
 representatives. Despite such expressions of loyalty as the sing-
 ing of the Portuguese national anthem at village parties the
 'government' is too distant and shadowy for the Ovimbundu to
 have much knowledge of it. Nor has the post tried effectively to
 build up new types of bureaucratic authority in the villages—
 the government headmen are not given sufficient backing or
 responsibility by the post to do more than execute its orders.

Hence, the establishment of new types of grouping and 797
 leadership at the local level has been the work of the missions, 571
 and it is through the missions that these new groupings are
 articulated on to the total Angolan social system. The mission-
 aries, who provide this articulation between the 'civilized'
 society and the local organization of the natives, form the section
 of the 'civilized' population which most satisfies, in its relations
 with the people, the expectations of the Africans.

To use another term, it is within the Catholic and Protestant 795
 Churches that Ovimbundu most clearly identify themselves. 156
 Baptism identifies an individual by giving him a name, hence
 Christians object to non-baptized people identifying themselves
 in this way. To an individual baptism is significant since it is
 concerned with his destiny. By it also he identifies himself with
 the 'civilized' population and achieves a new status superior to 854
 that of the pagans. The newly-born child of Christian parents 795
 will be given a Christian name and also an Umbundu name 551
 from one already held by a dead kinsman.⁷ A few villagers

⁶ Actually responsibility for appointing superiors of missions largely belongs to the superior of the Nova Lisboa district of the Congregação do Espírito Santo.

⁷ For Umbundu names, see: Elisabeth Eunk, *African Studies* (Johannesburg) March 1945.

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551 attempt to take on European surnames. Alternatively, a man may take his father's name and attempt to use it as a surname. Thus Joaõ Batista Tjindandi, a resident of Epalanga, had received Joaõ Batista in baptism, and had taken Tjindandi, his father's name, as a surname. This is, however, not at all a general trend. Even a village of mixed Christian-pagan population may be known by the name of its school, identifying itself by its Christian name.

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554 A man identifies himself also with social change and with progress by 'entering the school'. When a small girl, whom I asked if she had 'entered into the school' replied 'Not at all', her elder sister's husband remarked: 'She is asleep'. In the general Angolan society the religious referent is the most status-giving type of reference that most Ovimbundu can give.

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554 There is no very marked feeling in the superiority of one area of Umbundu country to another nor even is there a marked sense of the superiority of Ovimbundu to other tribes—thus the Kimbundu will be highly praised for the degree of European culture they have acquired. The very word Ovimbundu is used as an equivalent of 'pretos' (blacks) a word not used of 'civilized' Africans, since it is indicative of the lowest colour-class. As a Christian, a man has a status which he shares with Europeans.

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648 He can also identify himself not only in a general way with the Europeans but more particularly with the general church organization. There is much closer contact between the authority-figures of the church organization and the people than between the authority-figures of the administration and the natives. Thus all Catholics in the Nova Lisboa diocese are confirmed by the Bishop of Nova Lisboa, and have seen him—similarly many of the Protestant Ovimbundu know of Dr. Childs, the headmaster of the Protestant secondary school at Dondi, through having heard him preach at a conference. Some Christian villagers would know the names of pioneer missionaries. Little is known by the people about the personalities or duties of the senior members of their administration, and even their titles are not properly understood.

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648 The religious differences which exist at local level have no marked significance in the relations of natives to the post. In certain circumstances a pagan may appeal to a Christian

KINSHIP

houses, coffee plants and so on there is little likelihood of disputes arising about the inheritance of land claims. A woman's property should be given to her sisters, after her children have had their cut. In one case a man inherited his sister's debts but allowed her children to inherit her property, 'lest they be sad'. A wife's fields return to her husband. 428

Inheritance is then a process by which the relations of certain kin, both sons and sister's sons, with the deceased are recognized by the transmission of his property. As with other aspects of Umbundu kinship, while the existence of the kinship tie provides the basis on which to found a relationship, its content is determined by the nature of the contacts between the individuals involved and the services given. 602

Although there is a definite tendency for men of chiefly stock to have longer pedigrees than other individuals there is no chiefly genealogy. When Paulo, the elder of the school of Epalanga, told me that had he not been blind he might have been chief of Gumba, he quoted the names of four chiefs to whom he was related. The chieftancy is not tied to a lineage, but can be held by any individual who can claim links with a former chief or chiefs. People 'of the blood of the chiefs' in no sense form a differentiated group of aristocrats significant in social life. 634

In similar fashion membership of the spirit-linked professions and of certain cults seems to have been a matter of succession of one individual to the role of another.²⁰ Membership of the hunting and smithing professions descended patrilineally, but if a hunter or smith had no son his position could be succeeded to by a daughter's son.²¹ 554

7. Kinship in a Changing Society

From this, and from other chapters, a picture of Umbundu kinship may emerge as something so blurred, confused, and confusing, as hardly to merit the term 'kinship system', yet at 602 103

²⁰ I.e. rather than admission to a corporate group of hunters. A man can inherit his father's hunting spirit before the latter's death; in Epalanga Batista had received the hunting spirit of his father Epalata.

²¹ My informants were not agreed as to whether a sister's son could inherit in default of a son.

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was a man of fifty or more, who lived in Portuguese style making money from coffee and other crops. He claimed to be an *assimilado* (African with the status of a Portuguese citizen) but in actual fact he was not one. He had employed a man called Kusumula, who lived in Epalanga and was the brother of Kapapelo's wife. 578 627

To appreciate the point of Justino's complaint, it is necessary to explain the significance of certain terms indicative of ethnic and social status. Otjimbundu is the singular of Ovimbundu, a people defined by the use of the Umbundu language. It is also used to refer to any black person (thus I was often asked whether there were Ovimbundu [i.e. Africans] in England), and is therefore equivalent to the Portuguese *preto* (black), which when used of a person has a rather pejorative sense like 'native' in other parts of Africa. Livingstone, writing a hundred years ago, remarks of one area in Angola; 'The people under him (the chief) are divided into a number of classes. . . . They are also divided into gentlemen and little gentlemen, and, though quite black, speak of themselves as white men and of the others, who may not wear shoes, as "blacks".' Justino's complaint was that Sapapula had referred to him as a *preto qualquer* or in Umbundu (Sapapula did not speak Portuguese), *otjimbundu tjango*, a mere black. 578 627

Justino delivered a speech when the people from Epalanga had settled on the veranda of his house in which he declared with much force that he was not an Otjimbundu 'Ame sitjimbunduko.' This accusation was based on information given him by Kusumula, who alleged that Sapapula had said to government headmen that Kusumula could be recruited for road work, as he worked not for a white (a term applied also to *assimilados*) but for a mere black. 578 627

I give the main lines of the ensuing argument. Sapapula denied that he had called Justino a black. Kusumula claimed that Sapapula was always picking on him. Sapapula declared that he had founded the village, and that Kusumula wanted to break it up. Kapapelo said that he had at one time given medicine to a girl and Sapapula had told Jaime to kill him because he might have seduced her. Kutenga Lusase, the chief

* Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches*, p. 411.